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News Release



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ARTHUR R. MARSHALL LOXAHATCHEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

20-Mile Bend Entrance Remains Closed

In a joint statement the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and the South Florida Water Management District (District) announced today, the opening of the 20-Mile Bend Entrance and Boat Ramp of the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge would be delayed until further notice. The reason for not opening this entrance to the public in October as announced earlier is because of a need to improve the slope of the boat ramp. The onslaught of two hurricanes, Frances and Jeanne, and resulting high water levels, did not help the situation, and has caused further damage to the new entrance/ramp. As a combined effort, this project is important to both agencies. For this reason, the Service and the District want to make sure that the entrance and ramp is completely usable and safe prior to opening it to public access. For more information, please call either the Service at 561-732-3684 or visit the Service web site at <http://Loxahatchee.fws.gov> or the District at 561-682-6640.

The refuge is located off U.S. 441/SR 7, two miles south of SR 804 (Boynton Beach Blvd) and three miles north of SR 806 (Delray Beach's Atlantic Avenue). The refuge is currently open from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., seven days a week. Refuge hours change seasonally and are posted at each entrance. The Visitor Center hours are 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. from Monday through Wednesday and from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on weekends and holidays. The Visitor Center is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays through mid- October. The Visitor Center is closed on Christmas Day. An entrance fee of \$5.00 per vehicle or \$1.00 per pedestrian is charged. A variety of annual passes, including a \$12.00 refuge specific annual pass, are available.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 100-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System comprised of over 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands, and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fish and wildlife management offices, and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program

that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.